

MISSOURI CONSERVATION SHOWCASE

Beef and Poultry Producers Enjoy Perks of Conservation

Nearly every day as Joe and Pauline Brisco sip their morning coffee, they are reminded why it is important for them to properly manage the animal waste generated on their Anderson, Missouri, beef and poultry farm.

The reminders come not from the taste of the coffee but from the location.



Joe and Pauline Brisco like to start their days at this spot above a stream flowing through their farm.

The Briscos like to sit on a bench on the bank above their private waterfall on Patterson Creek, which flows through their property on its way to the Elk River. The sight and sound of the clear water cascading over rock ledges provides a tranquil beginning to their days. At other times, family picnics and barbecues are held at the site. And the Briscos grandchildren swim in the cool, clear pool beneath the falls.

Joe and Pauline Brisco wouldn't want their grandchildren exposed to polluted water. They don't want yours exposed to it, either.

“They are very concerned about the water quality of the creek and the area,”

says Lynn Jenkins, a Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) district conservationist. Jenkins has worked with the Briscos to design and implement conservation practices on their farm since they moved to McDonald County in 1992.

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“They want to be able to raise poultry and cattle in a way that will preserve water quality, and they have become leaders in conservation and the proper use of animal nutrients,” Jenkins says.

Recently the Briscos were rewarded for their leadership when the U.S. Poultry and Egg Association presented them with its Family Farm Environmental Excellence Award for the Midwest Region.



Above, NRCS District Conservationist Lynn Jenkins, left, and Joe Brisco at Brisco's poultry stacking shed. At right, Brisco looks at the poultry litter burner he is trying to fine tune.



Jenkins and his staff have worked with the Briscos to develop a conservation plan for their 794-acre farm, and a nutrient management plan for their turkey operation. They also have provided technical assistance to help the Briscos manage their 200 acres of pasture.

The Briscos have utilized NRCS and state cost-share programs to construct a litter stacking shed and dead bird composter for turkeys, and to conduct soil and litter tests. They are in the process of fencing the creek to keep cattle out, and already have fenced another 150 acres of woodland to preserve it for wildlife.

Jenkins says the Briscos will try just about anything if they think it will help the environment.

“They’re willing to do a lot of conservation on their own, too. They don’t just rely on cost-share,” Jenkins says.

Pauline says she and Joe welcome the advice provided by NRCS and the McDonald County Soil and Water Conservation District.

“If they tell us to do something, we know they are telling us for our own good,” Pauline says. “Lynn was here the day we started all of this. We have never called and asked a question when we didn’t get the right answer from him.”

That trust is mutual. NRCS’ trust in the Briscos is partly why they were selected as recipients of a grant to purchase and install a poultry litter burner to provide heat for their brood house.

“For the litter burner, we wanted someone who was well respected and progressive,” says Rita Mueller, NRCS coordinator of the Southwest Missouri Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) project office. The Southwest Missouri RC&D office managed the \$23,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Agency.



In Joe Brisco, NRCS got even more than someone who is respected and progressive. He owned and operated a plumbing business for 30 years in Arkansas before moving to Missouri, and has utilized his mechanical knowledge and experience to try to overcome problems associated with feeding litter into the burner. When the original auger system didn't work well, Brisco set up a system to blow litter into the burner. More recently he has been working to develop a gravity feed system.

"The litter burner still has some issues, but we haven't given up on it," he says.

Once Joe gets the litter burner working to his satisfaction, no one doubts that he will share what he has learned. Jenkins says the Briscos have hosted numerous tours on their farm and are always willing to talk to groups about the benefits of conservation.

"We like to make people aware of things that maybe they weren't aware of that will help the environment," Joe says. "We just like to protect the quality of the water."

For Joe and Pauline Brisco, realizing the benefits of protecting water quality is as simple as a cup of coffee.

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*Written by Charlie Rahm
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*For more information about RC&D or NRCS programs,
contact the NRCS office serving your county, or access
this website: www.mo.nrcs.usda.gov/programs.*

*Patterson Creek, a favorite gathering spot for the
Briscoe family, is a reminder of the need to protect
water quality.*

